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SECRET/EXDIS
NOFORN/NOCONTRACT

INR WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS
OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS*

TRANSFERRED TO OTHER AGENCY
CONCURRENCE REQUESTED - 3.5(c)

No. 13, July 12, 1977

LATIN AMERICA

Argentina

Right Wing Seeks to Embarrass Videla. Jacobo Kovadloff, representative of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in Buenos Aires, and his family (all Argentine citizens), left Argentina on June 28 after being subjected to harassment and threats against their lives. When he and AJC chairman Richard Maass met with State Department officials on July 6, Kovadloff speculated that the terrorization of his family was the work of hardline generals Suarez Mason (1st Corps Commander, Buenos Aires) and Saint Jean (Buenos Aires Province Governor) who were inspired by:

--a desire to embarras President Videla's government; and/or

--Kovadloff's contacts with the family of detained journalist Jacobo Timerman.

Kovadloff stated that Timerman had been brutally tortured immediately after his detention on April 15, but subsequently was transferred to police headquarters in Buenos Aires where he received daily visits from his wife and an American rabbi. On July 5, however, an Embassy Buenos Aires contact reported that Timerman had again been transferred and was being held incommunicado.

On July 7, Chairman Maass announced the closing of the Committee's Buenos Aires office and issued a statement that:

--attributed the Kovadloff's harassment to "security police or other government authorities";

--criticized the Videla government for its inability or unwillingness to curb anti-Semitism; but

--denied that anti-Semitism was an officially inspired policy and blamed right-wingers seeking to embarrass Videla and undermine

* This round-up covers countries receiving development or security assistance or likely to make FMS cash purchases.

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relations with the US. [redacted] CONFIDENTIAL, State 157856, July 7; New York Times, July 8) 3.5(c)

Campora Exile Decision Reversed. Argentina's ambassador, Aja Espil, has told US officials in Washington that a decision to let former President Campora go into exile was reversed because of the reception accorded Chilean exile Clodomiro Almeyda (Former Minister under Allende) by the Department. (SECRET/EXDIS, State 153359, July 1)

INR Comment: Campora is something of a spokesman for at least part of the Peronist left. Argentine authorities believe that their situation is not fully understood in the US and have already protested the official US reception of Hipolito Solari Yrigoyen, a well-known lawyer-politician and human rights advocate who was recently released from an Argentine prison. They will be hesitant about granting Campora safe conduct if they think he will be similarly received. (SECRET)

Recent Human Rights Developments. Embassy Buenos Aires reported the following recent development on the human rights fronts:

--litigation continues over the government's ban on the Jehovah's Witnesses; the government has appealed a June 16 ruling which found the ban unconstitutional, and the case will go to the Supreme Court;

--another priest apparently has been kidnapped, but Church authorities have decided against taking a strong public stand because they do not wish to increase Videla's vulnerability to hardline pressure;

--Videla is considering a bill which outlines new regulations governing the constitutional right of state-of-siege detainees to leave the country;

--a federal judge has dismissed the government's case against 45 Radical Party leaders who signed a letter critical of official policies;

--since June 23, military trials have resulted in 21 convictions on subversion charges and four acquitals;

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--the sentences of three convicted subversives have been reduced by two-thirds in accordance with a July 1976 law which provided for such action in cases in which suspects surrendered and renounced Marxist beliefs. (CONFIDENTIAL, Buenos Aires 5028, July 8)

INR Comment: Military and civilian court activity is increasing. At least some alleged subversives (in the non-combatant category) are being processed, and civilian judges appear willing to dismiss government charges against non-terrorist dissenters such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Radical Party critics.

Church authorities realize that the Church could bring potentially decisive pressure for change in the government's human rights practices. They fear that Videla would be weakened in the process, however, and the way could be opened for a hardline takeover. After publishing a strongly critical bishop's manifesto in early May, the Church has again decided to hold its fire and hope that Videla's reputed moderation will bring gradual improvements. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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